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News - Tuesday, January 28, 2003

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## Musgrave debuts three bills

### Rookie Republican looks to aid seniors, farmers

By MATTHEW BENSON

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U.S. Rep. Marilyn Musgrave of Fort Morgan on Monday introduced a tax-relief measure for seniors and a pair of bills aimed at helping farmers and ranchers hobbled by the drought.

The trio of bills are the freshman Republican's first in Congress.

"I was sent to Congress to defend Coloradoans, and I am excited to start by pushing three bills that will reduce the tax burden faced by hardworking individuals and help drought-stricken agricultural producers," Musgrave said in a statement.



MUSGRAVE

The Emergency Farmer and Rancher Assistance Act would direct the secretary of agriculture to redirect unspent money from the 2002 Farm Bill to help farmers and ranchers who suffered crop and livestock losses in 2001 and 2002 due to natural disasters. The bill doesn't require a new appropriation.

Musgrave's second drought bill would extend from two years to five the amount of time ranchers who've sold their livestock due to weather conditions have to reinvest. Currently, ranchers only have two years to reinvest in livestock before they are subject to capital gains taxes for the sale.



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The measure would be retroactive and apply to livestock sales and exchanges after Dec. 31, 2000.

The Colorado Legislature adopted a similar measure last year.

Musgrave also intends to support additional drought aid for farmers and ranchers, said her chief of staff, Guy Short. Last week, the U.S. Senate adopted an amendment to add \$3.1 billion to an omnibus spending bill for 2003 to provide drought aid to farmers in counties declared a disaster area last year by the agriculture secretary.

Rob Fillion, director of national affairs for the Colorado Farm Bureau, said Musgrave's bill to redirect unspent Farm Bill dollars would open the bill, leaving it vulnerable to being raided by other interests. For that reason, he said, the American Farm Bureau is opposed to tinkering with the Farm Bill.

Fillion supports the proposal to extend the livestock reinvestment period for ranchers. But more important than either bill, he said, is direct drought assistance for farmers and ranchers.

Farm groups estimate that crop losses over the past two years amount to about \$6 billion -- which is in addition to \$4.4 billion the U.S. Department of Agriculture expects to pay this year in crop insurance.

Musgrave's third bill, the Senior Citizen's Tax Relief Act, would repeal a 1993 tax increase on social security.

The bill would reduce the rate of taxation on provisional income for seniors from 85 percent to 50 percent. It also would increase the minimum provisional income subject to tax to \$34,000 for single filers and \$44,000 for joint filers.

Senior citizens with a provisional income between \$25,000 and \$34,000 would no longer be subject to the tax.

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